

When businesses get creative – with the truth
Kinibiz.com
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By Stephanie Jacob

With businesses and advertisers becoming increasingly creative with information and liberal with facts, Tiger would like to emphasise the need for buyers to be-very-ware. It is worth remembering that behind every great offer, is usually a lot of fine print.

Tiger always thinks that it is prudent to believe that things are not always quite what they seem. Even in the jungle, where there is considerably less bull — well lets go with less bullcrap, to fool you into taking things at face value.

For example, below the deceptively calm waters of the closest watering hole may lie a predator just waiting to take bite out of the next unfortunate kancil that draws up for a cool drink of water. Why, even amongst the seemingly tall grass and greenery, this Tiger herself might just be biding her time to capture some yummy dinner.

What Tiger is trying to say is this; in the jungle it is always a good idea to look beyond appearances and consider what may lie behind it. And given that this Tiger believes that it is her duty to keep an eye out for Kinibiz's loyal human readers, this cat would like to extend her advice to them too.

Over the past few weeks, two cases in particular have stuck out like a sore paw to Tiger. The first was a poster prominently displayed around the new low cost carrier terminal, klia2, by its owner and operator Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB).

The poster professed that 'klia2 is 23% cheaper to build than LCCT'. It detailed that klia2 was built for RM1.1 billion with a terminal size of 257,000 square meters (SQM), equalling RM4,280 per SQM. Meanwhile the old LCCT terminal was built at a cost of RM334 million with a terminal size of 60,000 SQM — translating into a cost of RM5,567 per SQM.

Needless to say, the RM1.1 billion figure raised Kinibiz's eyebrows as it had been widely reported that klia2 cost RM4 billion; the latter figure being later confirmed by the deputy minister of transport and the managing director of MAHB.

Kinibiz was quickly on the scent, and upon a bit of investigation was told by MAHB that what they meant was that the terminal portion alone of the klia2 complex cost RM1.1 billion, and that this portion alone had been 23% cheaper to build than the old low cost terminal.

It is worth noting that nowhere on the poster did MAHB state that it specifically means the terminal. So the question is whether or not the average human passing through klia2 would be able to discern MAHB's meaning from the poster, and especially from the headline.

Tiger is willing to wager that they would not. Of course RM1.1 billion was the initial cost estimate for the the project. When it opened on May 2, klia2 in its entirety had in fact cost RM4 billion and was over-budget.

Tiger curiosity was also piqued when one of the Kinibiz pack came across this Bernama piece, the other day that suggested that Tesco Malaysia will spend RM40 million to subsidise the price of goods for their consumers.

Eyebrows raised again, Tiger wondered could it really be? A corporation taking a hit of RM40 million all for the sake and pockets of their consumers?

On the scent again, Tiger's Kinibiz comrade quickly found that the subsidy is, well not quite a subsidy. More accurately, it is probably more akin to marketing expenditure.

In a nutshell, the company lowers the price on some goods to attract customers in and then counts on the fact that they will likely buy all the other items they need/want and this allows them to make the difference up.

So not quite the handout the company wants you to believe it is by calling it a subsidy and more a marketing strategy. But then again, Tiger does not suppose titling its campaign 'Tesco RM40 million marketing push' will catch the right kind of attention now, will it?

But before you humans get into a rage over being misled, consider the fact that neither of the above companies, nor the multitudes of others that are equally creative with their information are doing anything illegal.

Tiger says this because often behind every pretty picture, attractive offer or heroic claim is a clever mix of fine print and a selective use of words and information. In a nutshell, any truth told the right way can be made to sound positive (or negative) in line

with an ulterior agenda – little wonder then, that the credo of a well known international advertising firm is ‘truth well told’.

If taken as a sincere promise, then the motto represents a commitment to delivering true information with regards to the campaigns they create. But if you are a cynical cat just like Tiger, you might wonder if it in fact means presenting the hard truth in a way that is....well, less hard.

There is a reason that the age old advice is caveat emptor or let the buyer beware. When buying products or accepting information, this advice is better than most.

GRRRRR!

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